

REPRESENTATIVE JIM SOLETSKI
ASSEMBLY BILL 115 TESTIMONY
SEPTEMBER 8, 2009

Madame Chair, thank you for holding a hearing on Assembly Bill 115.

Similar to what the Assembly did earlier this session with the labor history bill, I have worked with the chair to develop a substitute amendment which would direct the Superintendent of Public Instruction to incorporate into the model academic standards for social studies the role of the Hmong in fighting for the United States in the Vietnam War, the persecution of the Hmong by the Laotian government after the Vietnam War, and the reasons for the emigration of many Hmong to the United States. Without creating a mandate on school districts, we will be assisting them with fostering a better understanding of the contribution of the Hmong to our nation.

Statistics from the last census show that while comprising only 0.63 percent of our state population, Wisconsin ranked third in the nation for Hmong population.

Immigrants come for various reasons, seeking refuge and freedom or just simply better opportunities. And, all too often new groups face discrimination, as the Irish once did in Boston. The Hmong came here seeking refugee because of the persecution they faced for having been our allies during the Vietnam War. All too often the contributions of the Hmong people to the United States during the Vietnam War have gone unrecognized. This legislation will give children the opportunity to learn about this rich history. I am hopeful that with a better understanding of the challenges the Hmong have faced in Laos and in Wisconsin, that people will have an increased appreciation of their culture and their path to Wisconsin.

Thank you.